

Idaho, Sydney Smith of Claremont McKenna College, Victoria Izaguirre of Texas A&M University, and Zach Blair-Andrews of University of South Florida.

“Public Service Review” provides these young leaders an opportunity to write about their experiences and inspirations in their own words, sharing stories of challenge and hope as they engage in public service in a variety of formats and focus on a range of causes that draw their passion. Not only do their stories inspire those of us engaged in public service here in Congress and elsewhere, but their experiences provide insights and guidance for younger students as they look for ways to become involved in public service.

On behalf of my colleagues, who I serve with on the Stennis Center Board of Trustees, U.S. Senator ROGER WICKER, Tom Daffron, U.S. Representative TERRI SEWELL, and former U.S. Representative Martha Roby, I commend the Stennis Center for this excellent publication and urge you to read it and share it with others who will benefit from reading these inspiring stories.

RECOGNIZING 100 YEARS OF THE “FLYING YANKEES”

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize the 103rd Airlift Wing of the Connecticut Air National Guard—the “Flying Yankees”—as they celebrate 100 years of dedicated service to the State and our Nation.

The Flying Yankees are the 11th oldest Air National Guard unit in the United States, including a squadron that has served more than 90 years in military aviation. Operating from the Bradley Air National Guard Base in East Granby, CT, the 103rd Airlift Wing provides tactical airpower and mission support for the State and Nation. The unit carries out this critical mission through highly qualified and proficient C-130 aircrew.

The 103rd Airlift Wing has a history that dates back to the earliest years of military aviation, and the Flying Yankees have fought bravely in numerous conflicts throughout the last century. From their efforts in France during World War I, to their heroic service in the China-India-Burma theater of operations during World War II, the Flying Yankees have a long history of valiantly serving our Nation both at home and abroad. The unit’s service continued through the Cold War and more recent conflicts. The Flying Yankees innovate to meet the changing needs of the State and the Nation, carrying on their great tradition of dedicated service to this day.

For a century, the brave members of the 103rd Airlift Wing of the Connecticut Air National Guard have embodied their motto—“faithful and alert”—answering the call to service for both Connecticut and the Nation. I applaud their determination and dedication to the vital mission of defending

our country and hope my colleagues will join me in congratulating the Flying Yankees on this momentous occasion of their 100th anniversary.

TRIBUTE TO PEARSON RIDDLE, JR.

Mr. TILLIS. Mr. President, I rise today to honor a great North Carolinian, courageous veteran, and the last living survivor of the Battle of Wake Island: Pearson Riddle, Jr.

Born in Pensacola, NC, on October 15, 1921, Pearson joined the Civilian Conservation Corps at 18 years old upon completing high school. After spending time in Oregon and California learning to operate heavy machinery, he was sent to Hawaii to work for the U.S. Navy and later joined the Wake Island workforce in August 1941 as a general laborer, providing essential support services to U.S. Armed Forces.

On December 8, 1941, Japanese forces commenced a successful siege of Wake Island despite the valiant efforts of marines, sailors, soldiers, and civilians. Pearson was among the hundreds of civilian contractors captured by Japanese forces on December 23, 1941. Forty-four months of grueling captivity and infamous brutality followed.

Pearson was kept on Wake Island until early 1942, when the Japanese forced POWs to board the *Nitta Maru*, which was destined for a prison camp in Woosun, China. After spending 19 months there in forced labor, the Japanese shipped Pearson and hundreds of other POWs to Kobe, Japan, and again to Tokyo where he was imprisoned until a May 1945 Allied bombing destroyed the prison camp. Sent north to Sendai 7-B Hanaoka after the successful Allied bombing, Pearson and the remaining POWs were liberated in September 1945.

Malnourished, ill, and abused, it took Pearson 2 years to make a full recovery, and despite lifelong medical complications from his imprisonment, Pearson never stopped serving. After his service, Pearson went on to build bases around the world, including in north Africa and Iceland.

In 1987, the Navy administratively awarded Pearson the rank of E-4 and evaluated him as a 100 percent wartime service-connected disabled veteran. Seventy-seven years after his liberation, Pearson received the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, and American Campaign Medal for his heroic devotion to duty.

Today, we honor Pearson Riddle, Jr.’s valor, service, and commitment to the values and principles of the United States of America. I ask my fellow Senators to join me in saluting Pearson Riddle for his service.

TRIBUTE TO MAYA ASHWAL

Mr. MURPHY. Mr. President, I rise today, with a unique combination of joy, sorrow, and pride. For the last 8

years, Maya Ashwal has been my right arm in the Senate, serving as my director of scheduling and operations in our Washington office.

I rise with joy today because my life and the lives of everyone who works in or with our office has been made better by Maya Ashwal. Maya is this wonderful combination of hard-nosed, no-nonsense grit, and gracious compassion. She brings a seriousness of purpose to her work, but she treats everyone around her with kindness and caring. Over the last 8 years, I watched Maya overcome obstacles that would have swallowed up lesser people. She has persevered through personal loss, finding a way to grow her compassion for others in the face of tragedy. She has conquered a litany of bad health luck, at one point finding herself stuck in South America dealing with a serious health emergency. Somehow, we all knew that Maya would find a way to come back stronger, with a smile on her face.

Through it all, it has been so wonderful to watch her grow as a person. Since she has been with our office, Maya has gotten married to Jeremy and welcomed a gorgeous daughter, Piper, into the world in the middle of the pandemic. She is a wonderful mother, who deftly balances work and family life.

But I also rise with sorrow today, because it is hard for me to imagine life without Maya. My colleagues will understand how a great scheduler or great assistant ends up becoming an extension of you, a part of you. That is what Maya is. She knows my preferences before I speak anything out loud. She guesses what I need before I know I need it. She smooths over bumps and rough spots before they are visible to me.

But she also provides great advice and counsel. I am lucky that we share many passions—like mental health and gun safety—and Maya has become a whip smart political counselor who I rely on to make sure that my daily agenda best aligns with my policy goals. The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act could not have happened without Maya’s leadership. Never before has such a complicated bill been written and passed in such a short amount of time. Over 30 days and countless meetings, zooms, and phone calls—with advocates, Senators, House Members, staff, administration officials—we negotiated, wrote, and passed the most serious gun safety bill in three decades. During that time, Maya was the air traffic controller for the negotiations, managing to create organization out of potential chaos. That bill is part of her legacy.

In addition to her work on policy, Maya has also been such a comfort to my family. Being a parent of young children, with a wife who works equally long hours, is an unsurprising anomaly in the Senate. Maya’s job over the last 8 years has been made infinitely harder since my schedule has had to